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New York

THEATRE CRITICS'

Reviews

1943

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†"The Patriot" opened Friday, January 29th, at the National Theatre.
†"The Barber Had Two Sons" opened Monday, February 1st, at the Playhouse Theatre.
†"Counterattack" opened Wednesday, February 3rd, at the Windsor Theatre.
†"Ask My Friend Sandy" opened Thursday, February 4th, at the Biltmore Theatre.

THEATRE CRITICS' REVIEWS IS A COMPLETE GUIDE AND RECORD TO THE NEW YORK SHOWS

Theater Critics' Reviews brings you each week the complete reviews as they originally appeared in these New York papers

NEW YORK SUN	NEW YORK TIMES
NEW YORK POST	NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE	NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
NEW YORK NEWSPAPER "PM"	NEW YORK JOURNAL AMERICAN

Place this week's reviews with preceding weekly reviews so as to have always an up to date file of the New York Stage.

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"Ask My Friend Sandy"

NEW YORK JOURNAL AMERICAN
February 5, 1943

Roland Young Stars in New Play of Man Who Gives Up Wealth to Greet New Day

By JOHN ANDERSON

IN STANLEY YOUNG'S first Broadway play, called "Robin Landing," produced five years ago, there was a character which I still remember with twinges of pain—a poetic half-wit named Laban, who swished through the Kentucky wilderness, making such remarks as "I slept ten years once in an elephant's ear. It was long enough but he died, and it was so quiet the noise wakened me."

Since Mr. Young seems to be dramatically partial to irrational youths it seemed at the Biltmore last night that poor addled Laban, weaker, if possible, in the head, had merely been transferred to another play called "Ask My Friend, Sandy," presented by Alfred de Liagre, Jr., with no less than Roland Young as the star. Knowing both Mr. Young (Roland) and Mr. de Liagre for gentlemen of wit, perception and taste, I can only conclude that poor Laban isn't the only one who has been sleeping in elephant ears. The boys must have been hexed.

Awaits New Day

Let me hasten to add that Mr. Young (Roland) does not play the unstable hobby-daddy at the Biltmore. That unhappy task is assigned to Norman Lloyd, a clever young actor well known not only on the stage but on the screen for his performance in "Saboteur." Since Mr. Lloyd is as smart as they come the thing is extremely baffling, and I give up. I had a theory that the play I heard had been written in invisible ink on the back of the one they thought they were playing, but this is plainly as crazy as Laban. After all the actors must have memorized the lines from something, God forbid.

Well, Mr. Lloyd plays Sandy, a Rockaway youth who in spite of a mental deficiency even a draft board should recognize, is a soldier in the Army. In his ardent preparation for the New Day which is to arrive with the peace Sandy makes it his mission in life to persuade Big Shots with money to give all their worldly goods away and get ready for the millennium.

As a publisher with plenty of cash Roland Young greets the proposal at first with suitable scorn. Since the Government, he says, doesn't seem bashful about coming and taking it why should he do anything so silly, not to say unnecessary. Sandy explains that it is good for his soul, an argument which the publisher accepts with a moderately straight face.

He takes the Negro cook, the Chinese butler, his secretary, and so on to Harlem on a wild binge celebrating the brotherhood of man, or something, and the next day becomes a taxi driver. His wife leaves him. He lives on olives in an apartment stripped of its furniture, and then discovers that an old book he wrote on "How to Be Happy on Less" suddenly becomes a best seller as a result of his personal publicity.

Second Fortune

He is rich again, and when his returned wife and Sandy both urge him to give away a second fortune he says no, which seemed almost the only sensible remark of the evening. Since it is made somewhere around 11 o'clock it is hardly worth waiting for.

It is painful to see good actors boggling about in such dull foolishness, but they do it gallantly—not only Mr. Young with his wry humor and sardonic emphasis intact, and Mr. Lloyd brightly alert in a morass of drivel, but Mary Sargent, Phyllis Avery and Anna P. Franklin.

The Actors' Equity Association should establish a medal for heroic conduct under dialogue.

There ought to be honorable mention, while they are at it, for the audience.

As a note on the folly of Broadway, permit me to point out that there are great plays gathering dust on the bookshelves. There must be better ones than this in almost any wastebasket.

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
February 5, 1943

'Ask My Friend, Sandy' Extravagant Comedy

"Ask My Friend, Sandy," comedy by Stanley Young. Produced by Alfred de Liagre Jr. at the Biltmore Theatre, New York, Feb. 4, 1943.

★ ★

By BURNS MANTLE

STANLEY YOUNG'S comedy called "Ask My Friend, Sandy," opening at the Biltmore last night, is the type of comedy that you quit listening to about the time you decide it could never have happened anyway, and would not be very funny if it had.

Mr. Young himself is still a playwright who continues to give promise of doing better things. He has had three chances now, with "Robin Landing," "Bright Rebel" and "Sandy," and missed with each of them.

We will, however, continue to hope. Any man who starts with as sound ideas as he has, and can write as good dialogue as he does occasionally, is not to be despaired of utterly in a theatre that desperately needs new writing talents.

"Sandy" tells of a fresh young soldier on leave who believes that the economic stability of the future could be the more simply established if the rich men of today would start giving away their money now, in place of waiting to have it taken away from them later.

Let them find themselves by embracing such honest poverty as Republicans believe Democrats would urge upon a befuddled people.

Publishers Aren't Like That

Sandy passes this philosophy on to Harold Jackson, a successful but bored publisher. It catches Harold at a time when he is very tired and a little fed up with a frivolous wife.

It would, decides Harold, he being helped to the decision with a couple of double rye highballs, be a darned good joke on somebody if he were to try out this fool notion. And he does.

He begins by democratizing his home. He doubles the wages of the hired help and takes them all out on a drinking party in Harlem. In a few weeks he is driving a cab. Or would be, if he could get a cab. And he is penniless. Or would be if an old book of his had not suddenly become a best seller, thanks to the advertising build-up contributed by his eccentricities.

Not So Good

Pretty silly, and, as entertainment, pretty flat. Too bad. Roland Young, who plays Harold, is such a good comedian with just a little sound comedy material to work with, it is a pity to waste him.

The support is what is known as adequate. Norman Lloyd, the Sandy, overplays his author's lead, probably by his director's orders. Mary Sargent is a pleasing domestic foil as the publisher's wife.

Phyllis Avery has a bright moment or two as a neatly fitted sweater girl. Franklyn Fox, Kay Loring, Anna Franklin and a smiling China boy, Joseph Tso Shih, complete the list.

Eight actors and a single set. Didn't cost much. That's one satisfaction. Alfred de Liagre Jr. did the directing as well as the producing. He did much better with "Yes, My Darling Daughter" and "Mr. and Mrs. North." Watson Barratt dug up a nice library interior.

NEW YORK SUN
February 5, 1943

Roland Young Back in 'Ask My Friend Sandy,' Presented at Biltmore

By WARD MOREHOUSE

ROLAND YOUNG, one of the drollest of actors, whose ingratiating ways have brightened many Broadway plays, plays ranging from "Rollo's Wild Oat" to "Beggar on Horseback," returned to town last night in a comedy that has an enormously entertaining first act and then quietly goes to pieces. This new one is called "Ask My Friend Sandy" and it is presented at the Biltmore by Alfred de Liagre Jr.

Mr. Young, back after an absence of five years, was in top form. Here he is again with his reticences and his grimaces, his dry underplaying, his halting speech and his bland humor. As Act One progressed, first-nighters settled back in their seats in delight. The writing was buoyant; the playing was sharp and sure. But somewhere in Act Two the author, Stanley Young, lost his touch and "Ask My Friend Sandy" fell apart. Actor Young, however, was steadfast to the finish.

Stanley Young, who knows his publishing field, began writing what may have been subtitled Fun in the Book Business. His principal character is a wealthy publisher, one Harold Jackson, who saw service in the last war. Into the Jackson household, fresh from the canteen and under the sponsorship of Mrs. Jackson, comes Sandy, now a soldier but once a cornet salesman.

Well, Sandy is a young man who might have broken loose from last season's play called "Jason." There are moments when he suggests a stock-company Danny Kaye. Brash, cocky over-powering, Sandy has ideas; he solves world problems. He has the questions and the answers. He talks and his publisher-friend listens, with the result that the publisher gives away all his money, loses his wife, becomes a cab driver, loses his job and then gets rich all over again with the best-selling proceeds of an old book of his own writing. Actor Young didn't give up even though Playwright Young did, and it would probably have been all right with those of the Biltmore's premiere audience if, at 10:50 P. M., the company had begun playing Act One all over again.

Norman Lloyd, now and then faintly suggesting Sterling Holloway of "Garrick Gaieties" memory, plays Sandy unflaggingly. I found him amusing early in the evening, but he soon begins to wear you down. The company, however, is really all right. Kay Loring, Anna P. Franklin and certainly Phyllis Avery as Mary (Squeegee) O'Donnell, Sandy's girl friend from Rockaway, fit nicely into the picture. Miss Avery, who got her start with Dwight Deere Wiman, is flip, detached, refreshing.

Mr. de Liagre, one of the younger, abler and more personable producers, has given Broadway some bright comedies. For one, "Yes, My Darling Daughter." For another, "Mr. and Mrs. North." As he did with those plays, he has done his own staging for this new one.

Whatever the shortcomings of Stanley Young's play, it does the New York theater a real service in bringing back Roland Young. So I ask my friend de Liagre to give us more and more of Mr. Young. Stay with us, Roland, even if you have to revive "Hindle Wakes." And there are not so many of us who will remember that one.

"Ask My Friend Sandy"

NEW YORK NEWSPAPER "PM"
February 5, 1943

Even Mr. Young Needs a Play

By LOUIS KRONENBERGER

AFTER being away from Broadway for five years Roland Young returned last night, as suave and ingratiating and twinkling as ever. It is good to have him back though I fear his visit will be of the briefest. *Ask My Friend Sandy* provides him with nothing much in the way of a part, and with nothing at all in the way of a play. If thistledown could thud, that's what it would have done last night. As it was, it just slowly settled, like dust in the attic.

Mr. Young has got himself involved in a comedy about a book publisher who lets a brashly benevolent young private talk him into giving away all his money. It would be hard to say why; for not only does the publisher find the young man irritating and his ideas extreme, but parting with the coin doesn't even help to lubricate the plot. In fact, it *is* the plot. For, having given away his money, Mr. Young merely stands around, first on one foot and then on the other, until he gets it (or its equivalent) back again.

The producer, I am afraid, will stand first on one foot and then on the other with less satisfactory results.

* * *

Being so painfully short on plot, the play puts a staggering burden on dialogue, which does nothing to help matters. The author displays a good sense of humor, but not often. His half-dozen amusing remarks are like faint chimes that interrupt the steady ticktock of his labored sallies and dreary chatter.

Mr. de Liagre has introduced as much spritely direction as so hopelessly languid an evening will permit, and Roland Young, as far as he can, makes up for his part by his presence. Norman Lloyd, Mary Sargent, Phyllis Avery and Franklyn Fox also do their duty.

NEW YORK TIMES
February 5, 1943

Roland Young as a Publisher in the Biltmore's New Offering, 'Ask My Friend Sandy'

By LEWIS NICHOLS

AGAIN one of the theatre's most agreeable personalities has come up against the immovable object with results that have happened before but still are immeasurably sad. For last evening Alfred de Liagre Jr. brought to the Biltmore "Ask My Friend Sandy," and through it Roland Young wandered like a wistful lost soul, trying with all the good will in the world to rescue some part of the evening from the gloom into which circumstances quite clearly were plunging it. He did not succeed, probably no one could have succeeded. For his new play is sleepy and slow and not funny—the three strikes that spell out for a farce comedy in any league.

* * *

The Young manner is gentle, retiring and shy, it offers a target for barbs and misfortunes. But it does need a certain amount of material: lines that fit in with the character or actions, otherwise it becomes just a manner playing in a void, like a shadow moving against a wall. A few minutes are fine as an exhibition of doing the almost impossible, but after that Mr. Young must call out for help, and in last night's play the author heard not nor did he come to assist. Not in a long while has the actor had such right to his air of sad and sheepish melancholy.

* * *

Another Young—Stanley—is the author, and having been an editor for a publishing company as well as a demon reviewer of books for this newspaper he may well know his publishers. At all events it has been his mood to imagine one, a hard drinker, of course, who is persuaded to give away all his money and follow the simple and happy life. Sandy, a young Army private, is responsible for this doctrine, which doesn't work, and the publisher makes a new fortune when an old book he had written on money and the simple life becomes a best seller because of the publicity. Undoubtedly there is a plot there, but the author does not dress it up beyond a few good lines and a short engaging bit in the first act.

In addition to the Youngs, others involved are Norman Lloyd and Mary Sargent. The former, who incidentally was the man thrown from the Statue of Liberty in Mr. Hitchcock's "Saboteur," plays the intense and strange Sandy, doing a good job of it. Miss Sargent is the publisher's wife, which all thing considered is a fairly luckless thing to be. Franklyn Fox is the publisher's partner, and Anna P. Franklin is the maid in the home when the home had money, and after, Mr. de Liagre directed.

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
February 5, 1943

Roland Young's Return

By HOWARD BARNES

ABOUT all that can be said for "Ask My Friend Sandy" is the fact that it brings Roland Young back to the theater. Five years in the film factories have in no way impaired his wry and precise sense of comedy. Unfortunately, there is so little actual fun in the new Biltmore Theater show that he has to go it alone for long stretches of a tedious farce. The blunt truth is that this Stanley Young play is so shy on genuine amusement that no amount of acting tricks serve to redeem it. The star has been given a rough return trip to the stage.

* * *

The author may have had a cute notion in mind with his alleged comic concoction, but it was not apparent after three acts last evening. At that point whatever zest had been built up by resourceful performing and random witty lines had so completely evaporated that it was merely a matter of waiting for the final curtain. That is generally embarrassing on both sides of the footlights. Young and his colleagues should be commended for going doggedly through the proceedings, even when there was nothing of any consequence to concern themselves with. Sympathy was in order on the part of spectators.

* * *

Wacky was once the word for such a comedy as "Ask My Friend Sandy," but it contoted a lot more humor than you will discover at the Biltmore. As it is, the play pretends that a rich publisher in his cups is persuaded by a screw-loose soldier to give away his fortune. Perhaps that idea might have been evolved into a mildly hilarious piece of spoofing. It gets nowhere, rapidly, in its current projection. The publisher discovers that being poor is not all that it is cracked up to be, of course, but there is not even a satirical edge to his predicament. The fact that he capitalizes on his boozy impulse by becoming the author of a best-seller can be put under any impolite heading you can think of offhand.

* * *

The acting is the one bright aspect of "Ask My Friend Sandy," but it has been given no more aid from the direction of Alfred de Liagre jr., who produced the piece, than it has been by the script. The action runs down at the same rate of speed as the fun, until the business of an ingenue booting the daffy draftee is the major flurry of the final stanza. Young is a fine actor. His assistants, particularly Mary Sargent as the publisher's wife, who somehow disappears from the play to return as a defense worker, make the most of very little. It is very little that is offered at the Biltmore.

'ASK MY FRIEND SANDY'

Farce comedy in three acts, by Stanley Young. Roland Young starred; staging by Alfred de Liagre; setting by Watson Barrett. Presented at the Biltmore Theater, Thursday, February 4, 1943, by Mr. de Liagre. The cast:

Harold Jackson	Roland Young
Jane Brennan	Kay Loring
Minnie Mae	Anna P. Franklin
Mrs. Jackson	Mary Sargent
Sandy	Norman Lloyd
Mary (Squeegee) O'Donnell	Phyllis Avery
Li	Joseph Tso Shih
Christopher Dickson	Franklyn Fox

NEW YORK POST
February 5, 1943

Roland Young Returns in a Slim Comedy, "Ask My Friend Sandy"

By WILELLA WALDORF

IN "Ask My Friend Sandy," which arrived at the Biltmore Theatre last night, Roland Young plays a successful book publisher who is sick of the business. For one thing, the manuscripts submitted for him to read are uniformly terrible.

The literary market, however, could hardly be in worse shape than the theatrical industry when it comes to unearthing decent manuscripts. If "Ask My Friend Sandy" is the best comedy that could be found to display Mr. Young's talents as a comedian.

Mr. Young is a delightful actor, and he has not been seen on the Broadway stage since 1938. After a string of anti-Nazi melodramas, we were looking forward to an evening of urbane and civilized comedy in "Ask My Friend Sandy." Unfortunately Mr. Young has returned to Broadway in the nearest approach to no play at all that we have encountered in some time.

The Stanley Young who wrote it is probably no relation to the star, or if he is, there must be a feud on in the Young family.

* * *

Gives Away His Money

The Sandy of the title is a brash and tremendously boring Army private picked up by Mrs. Jackson at a canteen. She brings him home where he meets Mr. Jackson, the successful publisher (that's Mr. Young), who is mildly amused but also rather exasperated when the young man proceeds to expound his pet theory that since we shall all have no money in the brave new world that is to follow the present conflict, the best thing to do is to give away everything we have now and learn how to live without the assistance of a bank-roll.

Mr Jackson then gets tight, dresses up in his old uniform from the last war—he fought with the French Blue Devils—and proceeds to take the colored cook, the Chinese butler, his secretary and her boy friend and several other people on a toot to Harlem, after which he decides to follow Sandy's advice and give away all his money.

His wife doesn't care for the idea, so she leaves him, and there is a third act in which Mr. Jackson, having lost his job as a taxi driver, sits around on packing cases while his furniture disappears piece by piece, until it turns out he has made another fortune out of an old book he wrote years ago entitled "How to Live on Less Money."

Mr. Young's drunk scene in Act I is very droll, and he looks, as his wife points out, just like a WAVE in his old uniform, but "Ask My Friend Sandy" is a vehicle so shaky that nobody, not even an old campaigner like Mr. Young, could ride two feet in it without looking very uncomfortable.

Norman Lloyd as Sandy reminded us of a very talkative parrot in an Army uniform, and the rest of the company had such colorless roles that we have almost forgotten them already.

"Ask My Friend Sandy"

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
February 5, 1943

Roland Young Stars in Satire

By BURTON RASCOE

ROLAND YOUNG is the only living person who can mumble in such a way as to make each word clear and distinct. He is as cute as a baby giant panda. He has manner, distinction, urbanity. He is one of the best actors I have ever seen, as satisfying in the role of Gentleman Johnny Burgoyne as in the role of Topper.

I had rather watch him trying to play a snare drum in the movie Ruggles of Red Gap than to see and hear Gielgud deliver both soliloquies from Hamlet. I had rather hear him say "Not at all!" than hear Maurice Evans deliver an uncut version of all the speeches from Richard II.

I had rather see him in a bad play than many a better box-office draw in a good one. And damned if I didn't have a severe test of that statement last night, when he opened in Ask My Friend Sandy at the Biltmore. Mr. Young is an excellent caricaturist and raconteur, off-stage. I wish that, last night, after the curtain descended upon a brilliant and promising first act and all of us were in an enthusiastic and happy mood, Mr. Young had come before the curtain after the first intermission was over and said: "Ladies and gentlemen: We have all decided back stage that the second and third acts of this play do not justify the expectations of that first act, which, if I do say it myself and in behalf of the other Mr. Young who wrote the play, was pretty good. . . . So, instead of going on with the second and third acts, I'll give you a brief resume of how the play turns out. And then I'll bring out my crayon and drawing board, which I happen to have in my dressing room, and try to entertain you—until the time the show would ordinarily let out—with some chalk-talks and caricatures. . . . I'll start with a portrait of Harry Hopkins, only slightly out of drawing."

* * *

Faulty Casting Stands Out

I am sure most of us (except fanatical New Dealers) would have enjoyed the evening thoroughly instead of going away with the feeling of "Isn't it too bad that nobody lately seems to be able to write a play for Roland Young that is worthy of his personality and gifts?" Or "What kind of a director is Alfred de Liagre, Jr., that he didn't cast the parts of Sandy and Squeegee better or make those kids who did take the parts act with a little more naturalness?"

That first act is, I repeat, brilliant and promising. It contains all the germs of an absolutely devastating satire on the New Deal. It promises to clear the air of a lot of cant and focus the light of telling ridicule upon many of the blue-sky economic theories of the more earnest minded of the New Dispensation. It promises to bring home, in crisp, revealing truisms and observations, what many people, including Democrats as well as Republicans, Socialists, Prohibitionists and Labor party members, are beginning to think about the administrative idealism, which appears to be that we of the United States shall win friends and influence people all over the world by the simple device of giving the shirtless the shirts off our backs and doing without ourselves.

The idea of the play is swell. But Stanley Young, the author, either didn't know what to do with it or he did know what to do with it but some Broadway hack was called in to tinker with the play and succeeded only in sabotaging it. It just trickles out in the second and third acts, in spite of Roland Young's presence, into sheer inanity, lacking in credibility, sense or continuity of theme.

* * *

A Bored Reformer

In the first act Mr. Young is a successful publisher, rather bored and disillusioned with his business but resigned to it, having passed his youth as a callow author, hopeful of reforming the world by the bright idea of making everybody give away their money and be as poor as he is, and later serving in the last

(Continued on page 388)

"Counterattack"

NEW YORK SUN
February 4, 1943

'Counterattack,' Play of the Eastern Front, Presented at Forty-eighth

By WARD MOREHOUSE

FORTY-EIGHTH STREET has become theatertown's front line. All of the current war plays, all three of them, are now crowded into the same block, which is peopled with Russians, Norwegians, Nazis and the American-made soldiers of Maxwell Anderson. The latest drama of men under arms, "Counterattack," arrived last night.

"Counterattack" is the melodramatic account of Russians and Nazis trapped in the cellar of a bombarded and collapsing house on the eastern front in the fall of 1942. Written by Janet and Philip Stevenson and based on a Russian original, it has been staged by the resourceful Margaret Webster. As played in its first performance at the Forty-eighth much of it is taut, tricky, exciting stuff; some of it is static and tedious.

I haven't been to Voronezh or Kupyanski or Voroshilovgrad, but the sound effects of Miss Webster's production do serve to suggest the flame and the fury of that Russian battleground, and these effects, along with frequent forays on the part of the Nazi prisoners, serve to provide tension and suspense.

The Russian and German armies have been battling for a town which has been fiercely bombarded. German soldiers take refuge in a cellar and there they are surprised and captured by the Russians. A Russian corporal, hard and wise in the ways of war, and a young private are given the job of guarding the Nazis, seven soldiers and a nurse, keeping them alive and getting what information they can. As this vigil progresses bombs close all exits and there they are, captors and prisoners, in their dungeon with scant hope of rescue and, with food and rationed water gone and with every likelihood of being buried alive. As the weary corporal and his young comrade hold their prisoners at bay the Nazis kick over lanterns, try to grab rifles and keep the cellar frequently astir. It is the Russians who finally come to the rescue, drilling their way through.

Morris Carnovsky is the corporal of "Counterattack." Here is a sensitive and compelling actor who has given many good performances in Broadway plays of the past ten years. There are moments now and then—such moments when the play is at a standstill—when Mr. Carnovsky seems about ready to take off his corporal's garb and go back into one of his contemplative and idealistic roles in a Group Theatre production. But he gives, in a trying part, an engaging and lusty performance, and he proves himself a man who can sleep standing up and also spring quickly into action.

Barbara O'Neil, Martin Wolfson, and Sam Wanamaker contribute effectively to the more engrossing moments of "Counterattack." Broadway has had many a play in which but one woman appeared—"What Price Glory," "The Wolf," "White Cargo," "The Deluge"—and to the list you now add this Soviet drama by the Stevensons, which they adapted from the original of Ilya Vershinin and Mikhail Ruderman. I wondered last night about Miss O'Neil's lipstick and manicure but perhaps cosmetics are unrationed in Nazi nursing circles.

Margaret Webster, director, actress and student, who has shown such skill and perception in many of her productions, going her unfettered way with decision and imagination, has worked hard with this front-line drama and apparently has had a good time doing it. A play with marked defects this "Counterattack" but, on the whole, a creditable effort.

NEW YORK JOURNAL AMERICAN
February 4, 1943

Barbara O'Neil Cast in Drama of Reds and Nazis Trapped in Bombed Cellar

By JOHN ANDERSON

THE drama was trapped again in a bomb wrecked cellar last night at the Windsor Theatre where two Russian soldiers in "Counterattack" disarmed and held off eight Nazis and a tardy final curtain for three acts. It was then that the victorious Red Army swept back over the beleagured town and rescued the stalwart comrades and, perhaps, the audience. Somehow the war plays that are thus entombed gasp for air before the actors do. "Counterattack" has moments of vivid and exciting melodrama, but even with some excellent performances under Margaret Webster's unflagging direction the play sags and seems unable to sustain itself.

One serious trouble seems to be that since it is based by Janet and Philip Stevenson on a Russian war play it lacks real suspense. It is impossible to doubt that the pair of gallant Russians will be saved by their own people, and impossible to imagine that the boastful Nazis will not bite the dust. The authors work frantically to keep the plot on edge, but it is plainly in the bag all the time. It is so tainted with sure-fire theatricals that you might as well expect Sherlock Holmes to fail.

Certain Triumph

It is this foreordained triumph, I suspect, which undermines the play's effect, for while every word of it could be true, and may be true for all I know, its loyalty to the cliches of the theatre creates a general air of disbelief.

Thus when the slinking Nazis kicked over the lantern and tried to snatch a gun from the Russians, the usual excitement of such doings was diminished somewhat by the knowledge that the authors could see in the dark.

When one Russian was wounded and the other (almost dead from lack of sleep) was near defeat the audience seemed not nearly so worried as the authors doubtless hoped, since all such theatrical stencils rely firmly and safely on the Nick of Time. If you borrow the pattern you know that according to the laws of the Ten-Twent-Thirt, the movies, and the Eternal Verities of time-tested hokum (a) that the marines will land from the U. S. S. Olympia; (b) the Northwest Mounted will sweep in the rescue, or that (c) Milli Hart faintly disguised as two-gun nemesis, will save the day.

Fine Performances

The Russian soldiers deserve better of the theatre than this; in fact we all do, especially with such material at hand for simple and honest drama. Certainly the present actors deserve a better play when they turn in such performances as Morris Carnovsky's genially amusing, puzzled, but heroic Russian corporal and as Martin Wolfson's unerring portrait of the one decent Nazi in the lot. Sam Wanamaker is excellent as the other Russian soldier, and Barbara O'Neil, as a German nurse and the only woman in the play, gives a performance that is admirable in its power and effectiveness.

In John Root's vividly wrought and believably wrecked setting Miss Webster gives the play every benefit of shrewd timing and emphasis, but the play itself just doesn't hold water—to say nothing of blood, sweat and tears.

"Counterattack"

NEW YORK NEWSPAPER "PM"
February 4, 1943

Melodrama in a Soviet Cellar

By LOUIS KRONENBERGER

IN *Counterattack*, the Stevensons have refurbished a Soviet war play, and as sheer melodrama it has its points. It is direct and compact; it generally holds your attention; and it has moments of excitement and suspense. But it succeeds in being pretty good theater at the cost of being very bad drama, sacrificing too much that should appeal to your heart and mind for a straight assault on your blood pressure. There is, in fact, an unreality about it that not only defeats it as drama, but that distorts it as melodrama. It is nothing against even the best thriller that afterwards you do not believe what has happened. What tempers the thrills of *Counterattack* is that even at the time you do not believe what is happening.

In part this is no doubt due to the very situation around which *Counterattack* is built. For three acts, two Russian soldiers are trapped with eight German prisoners in a cellar whose entrance has caved in. Throughout the last act, moreover, one of the Russians lies seriously wounded on the floor. The Russians must not only hold off the disarmed but crafty Nazis, but for reasons assigned in the play they must make every effort to hold them off without killing them. This extra twist has its lively melodramatic uses, but it adds terribly to the playwrights' burden of making what goes on believable. The Russians not only have an awful lot of narrow escapes for one evening, but some of them are pretty awkwardly contrived.

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Though the melodrama wholly wins out, the play palpably attempts the more serious task of revealing Russian character, and of contrasting it with the Nazis'. This is achieved at times with a certain blunt effect, but weakened at others by a rather naive and words-of-one-syllable didacticism. The authors have tried to humanize their characters, even most of their German ones, with a kind of rough-and-ready dialogue and a kind of hard-hitting humor. But the characters themselves are seldom very real, and what individuality they sometimes begin to have is swallowed up in the action. It is not because the point is important in itself, but because so much of the play seems unreal, that one is constantly aware of the anomaly of these Russians and Germans talking away at one another, though presumably the one group does not understand German nor the other group Russian.

Margaret Webster has given the play vigorous direction and the cast is generally competent. As a Russian corporal Morris Carnovsky gives variety and feeling to an unevenly written part, and as his wounded compatriot Sam Wanamaker is likable and valiant. Barbara O'Neil does well enough as the only woman in the play, a German nurse, but seems a trifle miscast. Martin Wolfson is effective as a Nazi who revolts against Hitlerism, and John Ireland, Richard Sanders and Rudolph Anders come through in smaller parts.

'COUNTERATTACK'

Play in three acts, by Janet and Philip Stevenson. Produced by Lee Sabinson, and staged by Margaret Webster. Setting by John Root. Presented at the Windsor Theater, February 3, 1943, with the following cast:

First German Soldier	Philip Pine
Second German Soldier	Douglas Hubbard
Third German Soldier	Richard Rudi
German Sergeant	Harold J. Stone
Emma Dahlgren	Barbara O'Neil
Weiler	Richard Basehart
Glitzsparer	Karl Malden
Mueller	Richard Sanders
Huebsch	John Thomas
Stillmann	Martin Wolfson
Ernemann	Rudolph Anders
Krafft	John Ireland
Kulkov	Morris Carnovsky
Kirichenko	Sam Wanamaker
Lieutenant Petrov	Donald Cameron
Barsky	Orin Jannings
Generalov	Bert Freed

NEW YORK TIMES
February 4, 1943

THE PLAY IN REVIEW

"Counterattack"

By LEWIS NICHOLS

PROBABLY it is Margaret Webster who is the heroine of "Counterattack," which opened last evening at the Windsor Theatre. For she has taken what must have been a not very good play and by her direction has built it into a rather tense melodrama. At the same time and by the same system she has given to Broadway the best of the series of dramas about the Russian people in the defense of their land against the Nazi invaders.

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To take the fascist side before the counter-attack there are numerous things wrong with the play Janet and Philip Stevenson have derived from a Russian work by Ilya Vershinin and Mikhail Ruderman. Much of the characterization is of the poster type, put on with full sweeps of red or black colors. Also, the action often stops completely for discussions that are only political and belong more on a platform. But once by these moments, Miss Webster takes hold again and makes of "Counterattack" an evening that is generally exciting and through which no one will doze quietly in his seat. Not in a long while has an audience spoken to warn a hero that a German was creeping up behind him in the darkness.

Basically it is a horror play. Two Russian soldiers are in charge of a group of German prisoners, all of them trapped in the cellar of a building after a bomb destroyed the stairway. They are to guard the group and to find out which is the officer, that he can be questioned. The Nazis are of various types—a captain, gestapo agent, one who ultimately goes over to the Russian side, a nurse—the only feminine character in the play—and others not defined. The Germans try various systems to overcome their guards as the days pass, the water gives out, one of the Russians is wounded and the other grows frantic from lack of sleep.

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That part of the evening that is not Miss Webster's, quite clearly belongs to Morris Carnovsky, who plays the part of one of the Russian guards. He has been set to watch the prisoners and find the officers, and his efforts are offered with an excellent blend of authority, uncertainty, humor and, finally, sheer will power. The authors have given Mr. Carnovsky, a long monologue, delivered by the guard after he has gone without sleep for several days, and his portrait of a man who has become half delirious from lack of rest is beautifully done.

Martin Wolfson also gives a good performance for the other side, as the German captive for whom Mr. and Mrs. Stevenson have the most liking. Barbara O'Neil's role is not a particularly well-planned one; it is as though a nurse had been added just for the sake of the proprieties. Sam Wanamaker is the other Russian guard. John Root has designed a setting that for some time likely will remain the last word for a basement, a destroyed stairway and the half-dim spot for a war melodrama.

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
February 4, 1943

Counterattack, Soviet War Play, Mixes Drama With Propaganda

By BURTON RASCOE

I DON'T suffer from claustrophobia, so I was not bothered one way or the other by Counterattack, which opened last night at the Windsor. Moreover, I have forgotten whether claustrophobes should shun representations on the stage of people who are entrapped underground or should face such representations as a means of curing them of their morbid dread of being inclosed. And I haven't time to call up a good psychiatrist and ask him what is the prescription in this case for patients of that class.

Anyhow, Counterattack is a melodrama in which the entire action takes place in a cellar whose exits have been closed by the piling up of debris from a bomb explosion. Two Russians who have been left to guard a dozen German prisoners are entrapped with their captives. The three acts are largely taken up by the efforts of the prisoners to overpower their captors by guile and stealth, having on their side the ally of mortal man's need for sleep.

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Heavy Propaganda Message

I am not being quite accurate when I say "largely taken up," because, as a matter of fact, this being an adaptation of a Soviet play, the Communist party's prescribed propaganda, which must endoctrinate all works of art, is there quite a good deal in Stalinist dialectic, direct and indirect, gumming up the action. This, from a theatrical point of view, is quite all right, however, for two reasons: (1) The audience is already on the side of the Russians as against the Nazis and, however suspicious one may be of the blessings of Communism, any sensible person must consider it real Utopianism in comparison with the loathsome doctrine of Hitler and his crew, and (2) The Communistic fervor of the younger of the two Comrades is stated in words so naif that they become the words of comedy and excite laughter.

This is the second play this season in which the suspense depends upon the fact that the principals of the play are entrapped underground by a bomb explosion, and upon the further fact that the captor is handicapped by being forced to keep awake, whereas, in rotation, the captives can sleep. The other play was Cry Havoc. It was a much better play than Counterattack, but its life was brief. So I have fears that the days of Counterattack are few.

In a way this is unfortunate, because there is some excellent acting in it. In fact, it is what you might call a bad play superbly done. Sam Wanamaker doesn't get equal billing with Morris Carnovsky, Barbara O'Neil and Martin Wolfson, but he deserve it, for actually he was the most completely credible character in the play as a young Russian peasant soldier, full of idealism and trying very hard to remember what is heroic, according to Comrade Stalin's standards, and humanly failing to remember his lessons at rather important times.

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Cast Uniformly Good

Those who, like the Messrs. Hemingway and Fadiman, advocate the utter extermination of those who have the least taint of German blood will be very annoyed by this latest disclosure of the propaganda doctrine from the Kremlin, in that no fewer than three out of 12 Germans (a large proportion) in this play are made out to be very noble people at heart, whom the Russians are glad to welcome as brothers after their minds have been cleared of the miasmas of Nazism. And, in fact, of the other nine Germans only two of them, an officer and a Gestapo chief, are represented as being knavish and brutal by nature, the others being mere average humans caught in a web they had no part in making.

The play is by Janet and Philip Stevenson, based upon a Russian play by Ilya Vershinin and Mikhail Ruderman. Miss Barbara O'Neil gathered new laurels by her understanding interpretation of the role of a German nurse who is converted to the Communist cause. The cast was uniformly good.

"Counterattack"

NEW YORK POST
February 4, 1943

"Counterattack," a Red Army Melodrama, at the Windsor

By WILELLA WALDORF

THE Russian successes on the Eastern Front are reverberating all over Broadway. "Counterattack," the latest melodramatic tribute to the Red Army, opened at the Windsor Theatre last night, and it will doubtless be followed by plenty of others. The Russians seem to be taking over Times Square.

"Counterattack" is an out-and-out thriller. Like most melodramas, it's pretty hard to believe at times, but if it isn't taken too seriously as a realistic picture of life at the front, there is a certain amount of excitement in it, and suspense.

The entire play goes on in the cellar of a house on the Eastern Front in the autumn of '42. Two Red Army men, a corporal and a private, have captured seven Nazi soldiers and a Nazi nurse there during an air raid. It is suspected one of the prisoners is an officer disguised as a private. The Russian lieutenant orders the corporal and the private to find out which one of the Germans is the officer and to stand guard until the raid lets up.

Russians and Germans Trapped in a Cellar

The two Reds are model, literal-minded soldiers who always do as they are told. They start questioning the Germans in a clumsy effort to find their leader, and when a bomb hits the building and they are all trapped in the cellar, they keep right on doing their duty until one of them is badly wounded and the other is tottering groggily on the verge of sleep.

Suspense is sustained by the fact that it is not easy for two men to guard seven men and a woman even for a few hours, much less three days, and although the two Russians, especially the corporal, are very good fellows, they come through the ordeal victorious not only because of their own valor and strength, but because the Germans are given to fighting among themselves, and some of them are sick of the rotten Nazi methods.

One of the Nazis is murdered while he sleeps. Another is a Gestapo spy who is afraid his fellows will kill him if they get the chance. The Nurse is more Russian than German by the time the rescuers finally appear, and one of the soldiers is definitely a turn-coat.

There is a naïve, copy-book simplicity about "Counterattack" that makes it sound a little foolish at times, and we rather imagine the Soviet play upon which Janet and Philip Stevenson based their melodrama must have been purely a propaganda piece designed to hearten Russian theatre-goers and show them what wonderful fellows Red Army men are and what a sorry crew they're facing on the Eastern front.

A Meticulous Production

In the Stevenson's Broadway version, the two Russians are amusing as well as heroic, and they are so well played by Morris Carnovsky and Sam Wanamaker—Mr. Carnovsky is especially fine—that the entire play is lifted somewhat above its station as they perform under Margaret Webster's intelligent direction.

It was not easy to identify all of the Germans last night, but there were good performances by Martin Wolfson and Rudolph Anders among others. Barbara O'Neil, the only feminine performer in the piece, appeared to have been dragged in merely to keep "Counterattack" from being all-male, and her role is so vaguely drawn that one could hardly blame her for not making much of it.

The production is a meticulous one, with all sorts of realistic bombing noises, an effective cave-in and a prodigious amount of dust, some of which spread itself even into the audience.

It struck us as the curtain fell that a great deal of technical skill, the efforts of a fine director and a notable performance by Mr. Carnovsky had been lavished on an intermittently exciting melodrama that hardly merited so much expert attention.

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
February 4, 1943

'Counterattack' Most Exciting Of the Anti-Nazi War Dramas

"Counterattack," drama by Janet and Philip Stevenson, based on a Russian original called "Probyeda," by Vershinin and Ruderman. Produced by Lee Sabinson at the Windsor Theatre, New York, Feb. 3, 1943.

★ ★ ★+

By BURNS MANTLE

IN "Counterattack" at the Windsor theatre two simple minded but loyally steadfast Red soldiers fight seven German soldiers and a German nurse in the cellar of a house on the Eastern front and beat them at selected phases of their own game.

They out-talk them, out-reason them, out-fight them and finally out-last them, through three days of approaching suffocation and a constant threat of internal insurrection.

Because Margaret Webster, who directed the staging, has managed to hold the stage heroics down and emphasize reasonably the commonly accepted characteristics of the two warring races, the drama never gets out of hand, and is steadily holding in interest.

It is, I think, the best example of gooseflesh melodrama direction since Shepard Traube, with similar skill, intensified the purely theatrical values of "Angel Street."

Bomb Victims

In "Counterattack" the Germans have driven the Russians out of a sizable Russian town. The Russians counterattack, and in a fierce hand-to-hand fight force a small detachment of Germans into the basement of a four-story building.

When the prisoners have been disarmed, Corp. Kulkov and Pvt. Kirichenko are left to guard them. A few minutes later a bomb explosion piles a lot of the building upon its foundations and leaves the prisoners and their guards in the basement awaiting rescue.

Rescue doesn't come. The two Reds take turns standing guard. The Germans are nasty and pleading by turns. They figure that the fanatically bolshevistic Reds will fall easy victims, either to their wiles or their appeals in the name of the common man's humanity.

The Germans try one trick after another. Corp. Kulkov is not to be outwitted, but has some pretty narrow escapes. Pvt. Kirichenko would boast proudly of the good Comrade Stalin and the happy Soviet people, but he holds fast to his rifle and keeps the intriguing boche in line.

The bad air and three-days' loss of sleep almost do Corp. Kulkov in, and in one German attempt Pvt. Kirichenko is laid out with a blow on the head. Which brings about a situation in the last act that has the audience panting with apprehension and giggling at itself for its frank enjoyment of the adventure.

Thrilling Finish

It is the third act that gives Morris Carnovsky his great chance. As the wearied and weakening corporal, half delirious and physically miserable, he carries on a monologue of self-accusation, mixed with determined loyalty to the Red cause, that is moving in the simplicity of its text and striking in the skill of its performance.

The country boy soldier of Sam Wanamaker is also frankly honest, and of an appealing simplicity in performance. Martin Wolfson rises to one scene as a Nazi who suffers a change of heart with fine force. Barbara O'Neil nicely realizes the sympathetic nurse.

The Germans are played with reasonable restraint. Rudolph Anders scoring as a crafty captain, John Ireland as a Gestapo man under cover, and several others with short parts effectively played.

The setting, by John Root, also offers an excellent performance as the best of the bombed cellars to collapse under off-stage pressure to date. This one looks as though it could have happened.

The audience relieved its taut nerves with a session of cheering the actors at the play's finish. It is Janet and Philip Stevenson's first Broadway hit, and they should be quite happy about it this morning.

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
February 4, 1943

The Eastern Front

By HOWARD BARNES

THERE is the stuff of a fine war play in "Counterattack." It is occasionally evident in the script and the acting. It is most fully revealed in the impeccable staging of Margaret Webster. The director has worked minor miracles with the new Windsor Theater production. Under her skillful guidance a wordy and repetitious account of Russian resistance to Nazi aggression takes on considerable suspense and dramatic excitement. Even so, it is a labored and somewhat disappointing celebration of a theme which has consistently eluded dramatization.

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Janet and Philip Stevenson, who have adapted "Counterattack" from a Soviet play, have not been wanting in sincerity. It would seem obvious that they have captured the full ideological and melodramatic content of the original. The two Red Army men, holding a gang of Nazi soldiers at bay in a caved-in dug-out, are the sort of heroes who have accomplished one of the greatest military victories of all time. The Germans are just what you would expect them to be. As they struggle through three desperate days before their rescue, there is ample opportunity for caricature and eloquence. All that is lacking is solid drama.

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Suspense is implicit in the single situation that springs the action, but it is scarcely strong enough to hold through three acts. Once the Soviet troopers have decided to hold on in a blocked-up cellar on the Eastern Front in order to turn over Nazi officers to the intelligence division, the play has few chances for elaboration. From that point on it is merely a question of whether or not Kulkov and Kirichenko can stick it. There are several attempts of the Nazis to trick them or kill them. Too often they are adventitious flurries of violence which add little to the dimensions of the show.

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Even the characterizations are blurred in "Counterattack." The Red Army men emerge with greatest clarity, particularly the wise miner, Kulkov, as he is played by Morris Carnovsky. He has some tough scenes, such as that in which he delivers a lengthy soliloquy as he fights off sleep, guarding his wounded comrade, but he handles them with force and feeling. Sam Wanamaker is fine as his younger compatriot who wants to become a hero. Meanwhile Martin Wolfson is quietly convincing as a German who goes over to the Russian side and Rudolph Anders and John Ireland are properly vicious as the chief Nazis. Barbara O'Neil is on hand in the part of a German nurse, but she adds little to the main current of the drama. "Counterattack" is well intentioned and splendidly mounted. It is still lean on theatrical substance.

"The Barber Had Two Sons"

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
February 2, 1943

Nazis in Norway

By HOWARD BARNES

THE authors of "The Barber Had Two Sons" are concerned with a two-fold theme. The new Playhouse offering deals with Nazi terror and Norwegian revolt in one of those fjord settings which are becoming increasingly familiar on the stage and screen. At the same time, it attempts to focus a personal tragedy, built around maternal love and sacrifice, against this grim background. Unfortunately they have treated both aspects of their somber subject with a minimum of theatrical skill and persuasion. At best they have written a pallid and disappointing tribute to unfaltering heroism.

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Perhaps it is the Hollywood conditioning of the playwrights which militates against Thomas Duggan and James Hogan, in this stage venture. Certainly their theme has been handled far more effectively in terms of celluloid than it is at the Playhouse. Even with the dynamic acting of Blanche Yurka, who plays a woman barber, faced with a choice of sacrificing one of her sons to the cause of freedom, the play has an empty ring. The dialogue is more often obvious than it is incisive. The scenes have melodramatic curtains, but the arrangement of situations is generally fumbling. "The Barber Had Two Sons" is the right kind of propaganda, but not the right kind of play.

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The mere account of civilian courage in the face of Nazi aggression and brutality carries tremendous weight, in whatever medium it is set forth. On the stage, it requires great skill and feeling to become dramatic as well as provocative. Duggan and Hogan have catalogued several savage acts of the Wehrmacht; they have explored the underground movement of revolt in Norway. On the whole, they are better off in their personal tragedy than the larger contours of their work. Even here, the action takes on lurid aspects when it might have had subdued intensity.

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Miss Yurka is a tower of strength in the proceedings. Her portrayal of a small town widow, who dedicates both her sons to the cause of killing the oppressors and betrays one when she discovers his treachery to the cause is fiercely compelling. Given better scenes and lines and she might have pulled off "The Barber Had Two Sons." The other players are less successful, although Richard Powers has some effective moments as the right-thinking son. Melville Burke has staged the show with an eye to keeping it moving around a single set, but he has great help from a trap-door, which serves as entrance and exit for dead and alive characters. "The Barber Had Two Sons" is not much, as war play or personal tragedy.

'THE BARBER HAD TWO SONS.'

Play in three acts by Thomas Duggan and James Hogan; Blanche Yurka starred; produced by Jess Smith and staged by Melville Burke; setting by Phil Raguel; presented at the Playhouse Monday, February 1, 1943, with the following cast:

Customer	Maurice Minnick
Mrs. Alta Hjalmer	Edit Angold
Lunke Hjalmer	Anthony Blair
"Ma" (Mrs. Mathieson)	Blanche Yurka
Hilda	Anita Vengay
Rudolph Bjorin Nilsen	J. Arthur Young
Karen Borson	Tutta Rolf
Christian Mathieson	Richard Powers
Johann Mathieson	Walter Brooke
Major Bowmann	Alfred Zeisler
Sergeant Brunnemann	Richard O'Connor
Corporal Heimer	James Darrell
Lars Tugar	Wolfgang Zilzer
Colonel Schmidt	Eddy Fields
Captain Ulmer	James Bass
Carl Nagel	Fairfax Burgher

NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
February 2, 1943

The Barber Had Two Sons Opens at the Playhouse

By BURTON RASCOE

IF YOU feel futile because age, sex, physical condition, circumstance or your job with one of the government agencies prevents you from doing your share of the actual fighting you can have a good time killing Germans vicariously at the Playhouse. We all did when The Barber Had Two Sons, starring Blanche Yurka, opened there last night.

A German spy is choked to death on the stage in the first act; an unsuspecting Gestapo chief has his throat slit in a barber's chair as the second act curtain descends; a female Quisling is washed out with a pistol shot by Miss Yurka in the third act; and, off-stage, throughout the play the Nazi invaders are decimated in gratifying numbers and in gruesome ways. Several hundred German troops aboard ship, off-stage, are blown to hellangone through a plot you watch hatched by the Norwegian patriots.

A Tense Melodrama

It is a tensely interesting melodrama that the authors, Thomas Duggan and James Hogan, have contrived and it is played to the very best advantage by an excellent cast, headed by Miss Yurka, who is so fine and distinguished an actress that she will not mind in the least if I say that the sensational honors of the evening were carried by a newcomer named Tutta Rolf, who played a difficult role with extraordinary brilliance and subtlety—a role requiring her to be a different person to each of half a dozen characters in the play and yet conceal her real character, even from the audience, until the final scene. The deep inner force and surface serenity through which Miss Yurka has made it impossible for a generation of motion picture fans to think of Mme. DeFarge of The Tale of Two Cities without seeing her as Miss Yurka, again comes into her fine characterization of Mrs. Anna Mathieson, the lady barber in a Norwegian village who had two sons, one a weakling and the other a youth of character and courage.

The drama has to do with the sudden and overwhelming invasion of Norway by the Germans in April, 1940; and shows in a credible manner the thoroughness of the German preparations for that conquest, in the way of planting fifth columnists and corrupting the minds of faint-hearted and pliable Norwegians. The drama also has to do with one village's underground resistance and the manner in which they carried on their revengeful extermination of scores of the invaders.

The fiddler who plays at the celebration of the honor that has come to the artist son of the barber is the spy who had prepared the way for the quick occupation of the Norwegian village while the celebration is going on. A schoolteacher, who works for the barber for her room and board, is a Lorelei, who ensnares both sons and seeks to make of one of them both a deserter and a traitor to his country, and who is revealed as a traitor out of sheer sluttish selfishness. In the end, Miss Yurka is forced not only to sacrifice the weaker of her two sons to the Nazis but also to kill the female serpent she has been harboring in her home.

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Starts Off Slowly

After a slow start the play picks up in excitement more because of Miss Rolf than because of increased violence in the action. As a special treat, the German officers are not all so many Otto Premingers, with shaved heads, monocles and an air of great and evil cunning. The Germans in this play are hateful enough, but are just ordinary dumb-clucks, mechanically and rather stupidly obeying orders. An Otto Preminger would never have come into the barber shop alone, got into a chair and asked for a shave, and when Eddie Fields, as Captain Ulmer, does that, the audience responds with glee. For Wolfgang Zilzer, as Lars Tugar, whose wife has been raped by this same captain and who has dedicated his life to the slitting of German throats, steps forward and begins his happy operation. Richard Powers as the virile son, Walter Brooke as the weakling and Alfred Zeisler as a German major also deserve special commendation, but the whole cast was good and the setting realistic and atmospheric.

NEW YORK SUN
February 2, 1943

'The Barber Had Two Sons,' Nazi Melodrama, Opens at the Playhouse

By WARD MOREHOUSE

IN THE three decades, plus two years, that have fled by since Grace George opened the Playhouse with a pleasant little comedy called "Sauce for the Goose," its stage has been given over to theatrical fare in great variety—realistic tenement glimpses by Elmer Rice, bristling comedy-drama by George Broadhurst, teacup urbanities by St. John Ervine. And now into Mr. Brady's theatre comes "The Barber Had Two Sons."

It is another play of the Nazi hordes in Norway. It is a fumbling, rambling and violent piece and was written by Thomas Duggan, an actor, and James Hogan, a screen director. Under the guidance of Jess Smith the company made the long haul from San Francisco and "The Barber Had Two Sons" was performed at the Playhouse for the first time last night.

The Messrs. Duggan and Hogan have packed everything into their play except a little writing. They give us the village of Aalesund and the barber shop of Mrs. Mathieson, who has two sons. One is Chris, a seaman, and he's stalwart stuff. The other is Johann, an artist, who is concerned with his murals and not the Nazi occupation. Chris is the leader in the town's uprising and in its plan to overthrow the Nazis in one stroke. Johann attempts to run out on the revolt and away with the terrifying hussy named Karen, who seemingly teaches school in her less destructive moments. There are two killings, one on stage, at the finish and at 10:50 P.M., the suffering and sternly patriotic Mrs. Mathieson has but one son, the heroic Chris.

The authors achieve a measure of genuine excitement at the end of the first act, with the Nazis storming in and taking over, but hereafter their play is ineffectual and plodding and becomes a strange mixture of a little of everything. The amiable, experienced and frequently adroit Melville Burke, who has staged more plays than Mrs. Katzenberg has seen, has done the direction and apparently was exhausted at the finish.

Blanche Yurka, who seldom has the best of luck with her choice of scripts, does what she can with the role of the Norwegian mother. Richard Powers, new to Broadway, has an out-of-doors stride and an excellent stage presence and could be quite a fellow in a well-written part. He is generally on stage when the play has its better moments. I gazed upon Tutta Rolf, who plays Karen, for the first time and will suspend judgment until another part comes along.

Jess Smith, the producer of "The Barber Had Two Sons," was represented on Broadway about ten years ago as co-sponsor of a melodrama called "The Web."

The moon was still down last night in the village of Aalesund—and in West 48th Street, New York.

"The Barber Had Two Sons"

NEW YORK POST
February 2, 1943

"The Barber Had Two Sons" a New Thriller at the Playhouse

By WILELLA WALDORF

"THE BARBER HAD TWO SONS," by Thomas Duggan and James Hogan, imported from the West Coast and installed last night at the Playhouse, was heralded as a new drama of occupied Norway. Since it is the first play on that theme to reach Broadway since "The Moon Is Down," the first-night audience arrived in thoughtful mood, prepared to assay the work in Steinbeckian terms.

The mood didn't last very long, for what the audience saw and heard was an old-fashioned riproaring melodrama of the "Curse you, Jack Dalton!" school laid; to make it seem more timely, in the village of Aalesund, Norway, during the Nazi occupation.

The evening started rather quietly in Mrs. Mathieson's barber shop. Mrs. Mathieson, the barber, had two sons, one a sea captain just in from foreign parts, the other an ambitious and promising young artist.

The sea captain, who had been around and knew a thing or two, recognized a German spy disguised as a musician, and proceeded to strangle him very thoroughly while the Nazis took over the town.

Many a Nazi Throat Is Cut

This was a mild introduction to what was coming later, when the citizens really grew irritated with their oppressors.

While transports blew up in the harbor without, the sea captain and his fellow conspirators evolved a terrific plot to wipe out the whole German garrison and open the port to the Allies.

The plot thickened until it curdled. Lars Tugar, who had cut a couple of Nazi throats the night before, needed a Gestapo captain's uniform to wear during the big revolution. Who should come in at that moment to get a shave but a Gestapo captain. As the second act curtain fell, he was sinking innocently into the barber's chair.

The audience roared with laughter and began to look around for beer and pretzels.

Authors' Motives a Puzzle

But there was no beer, no pretzels.

There were, however, two schools of thought regarding the probable motives of the authors in writing "The Barber Had Two Sons."

One contingent felt that it must have been written very seriously as a stern drama of Nazi oppression. The other was equally certain that the collaborators—scenario writers, possibly, in their spare time—simply set out to perpetrate a thriller that would outdo "Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street" and at the same time strike a modern, war-time note.

It's hard to tell, but whether they tried to or not, the Messrs. Duggan and Hogan have turned out a blood-and-thunder melodrama zesty enough to suit the most violent murder addicts, besides mixing in a heavy dose of mother love, patriotism, brute force, love making and comic relief via the village drunkard.

The result is a brew that will hold anybody's attention, as a combination of melodrama and farce. You can't help wanting to know who's going to be knifed or shot or strangled next. Bat an eye and you're apt to miss a murder.

Big Scene in the Third Act

The third act contains the big scene in which Blanche Yurka, the barber-mother, has to choose between her two sons . . . but we can't give this away. Go yourself, and take your beer and pretzels with you.

The large company includes—besides Miss Yurka—Richard Powers and Walter Brooke as the two sons who are so unlike, while Tutta Rolf, a Norwegian actress making her Broadway debut, plays the scheming blonde school-mistress from Oslo who causes more trouble than the Nazis. Everybody plays with commendable seriousness.

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
February 2, 1943

'The Barber Had Two Sons' Is a Drama of an Invaded Norway

"The Barber Had Two Sons," drama by Thomas Duggan and James Hogan, produced by Jess Smith at the Playhouse, New York, Feb. 1, 1943.

★ ★+

By BURNS MANTLE

"THE BARBER HAD TWO SONS," at the Playhouse, asks you frankly to take your melodrama neat. It is a story of the Norwegian occupation that in the effectiveness of its mechanics carries echoes of "The Moon Is Down." It is likely to suffer a similar divided reaction on the part of playgoers.

Which is to say that the newest anti-Nazi stage exercise belongs to that class of synthetic Hollywood drama that is emotionally spine-tingling but otherwise as empty as a Hallowe'en pumpkin.

It is really the barber's widow who has the two sons. One is Johann, artistic and weak, who would give his life to art. The other is Christian, husky and patriotic, devoting himself to the prosecution of an uprising that shall drive the Nazi invaders back across the Skagerrak.

The Germans move in on the little town of Aalesund. They are brutal and beastly in the accepted manner of stage Nazis. Christian, a sea captain, having had experience with the quislings, is hand and stolen uniform with the underground, killing when a scene is called for, plotting craftily in the cause of tricky suspense.

Plotting Thickens

Johann also does a bit of plotting, but only in the interest of his own and his disloyal sweetheart's escape.

Between them stands their mother, working bravely with the patriotic son and unaware of the other son's disloyalty. When the crisis is reached she must sacrifice one or the other; either the one she believes to be right or the one she has always loved the most.

There is plenty of blood-letting in "The Barber Has Two Sons." The cast is pretty well bled by the end of the evening. And one scene into which the ugliest of the Nazis walks deliberately, voluntarily seating himself in the barber chair and calling for a shave, brought a shout of satisfied laughter from the first audience.

Good Direction

The direction, by Melville Burke, stresses a natural action that is helpful. Blanche Yurka, playing the anguished mother with good restraint, moves about the barber's living room with the authority of its owner and the skill of the persuasive emotional actress she is.

Richard Powers, playing the sturdier son, and Walter Brooke the weaker, laugh off the tricks of their profession with good grace and are as convincing as needs be.

Tutta Rolf, an interesting little Norwegian actress of the Bergner type, who herself beat the inavsion by no more than a week or two, plays the scheming ingenue with an enthusiasm and a professional air that indicates experience and talent.

Wolfgang Zilzer, a character actor of the better type, has effective scenes as a plotter. Alfred Zeisler, J. Arthur Young, Eddy Fields and Fairfax Burgher, know their stage Nazis intimately.

Everything, as intimated, is in the best accepted stage tradition with nothing lacking but a story that might mean something more important than an imaginative scenario man's fiction. Thomas Duggan and James Hogan are the authors.

NEW YORK JOURNAL AMERICAN
February 2, 1943

Blanche Yurka Stars in Play About Revolt Against Nazis in Small Norse Town

By JOHN ANDERSON

AFTER favoring the films with her presence for four years, Blanche Yurka returned to the stage last night at the Playhouse where she may be seen by impulsive playgoers in a play about the Nazis in Norway, called "The Barber Had Two Sons." As an heroic lady tonsorialist, Miss Yurka works up a suitable stage lather now and then, though dramatically, I fear, the authors have provided her with no soap.

Since any play now or hereafter written about the rebellion of a small Norwegian village against the Nazi conquest will probably be compared to "The Moon Is Down," let us note the comparison and be done with it. It doesn't mean much one way or another.

The present authors, Thomas Duggan and James Hogan, have reduced the scale of the theme considerably by concentrating their attention, as the title plainly indicates, on the barber and her two sons. One of them is an energetic patriot anxious to throw the Nazis out, and the other is a timid, selfish, and finally cowardly artist who betrays not only his brother, but the whole underground rebellion in the little town to save his own neck, by trying to escape with his girl friend. Mother delivers her craven son to the Germans to be shot, and then gives herself the privilege of shooting the girl, which she does accurately. Mother knows best.

There is, of course, nothing essentially wrong with this tale except the fact that the authors fail to make much of it. Their play loiters around for two acts, while the characters seem to do everything except wear sandwich boards explaining their motives, and pointing at the plot. It is obvious and quietly uninteresting. The Nazis are very, very Nazi, and the townspeople are brave and unflinching.

Such desperate people fighting with their bare hands deserve the best the theatre can do. Their deeds should never be permitted to dwindle to uninspiring routine, and the tired stencils of melodrama. With the best intentions in the world the Messrs Authors seem unable to do anything for the heroes of Norway except make them dull, which is no help to anyone. The heroes can take it but the theatre can't.

To Miss Yurka the role of the Spartan matriarch doubtless seemed full of the rich gravies of stellar acting, but I suspect that the part deceived her. For human interest being what it is, I think we were more concerned over whether the patriotic son would beat the Nazis than we were in the personal irrelevance of a mother's attitude toward a traitor. That is why the play is really off center in its plot emphasis.

Vivid Sketch

Miss Yurka plays the dowager barber with considerable force and more than her usual restraint. But neither she nor Tutta Rolf nor Richard Powers, nor Walter Brooke seems able to give life to the lifeless characters or help them out of a sort of empty dramatic inertia. Wolfgang Zilzer, as a vengeful patriot, provided the one sketch that seemed alive and valid.

But after all, the authors put a Nazi captain in the barber's chair and gave Mr. Zilzer a razor, and a slow, descending curtain.

He used both to great advantage.

"The Barber Had Two Sons"

NEW YORK NEWSPAPER "PM"
February 2, 1943

Another War Play And Another Flop

By LOUIS KRONENBERGER

WAR plays—except for *The Eve of St. Mark*—go on having a bad time of it, and audiences with them. The one that turned up Monday night is plainly one of the unhappiest exhibits of them all. About the only thing this tale of the Nazi occupation of Norway manages to accomplish is to make John Steinbeck's play on the same theme, *The Moon Is Down*, seem a hundred times better in retrospect than it did in performance.

To tell the truth, almost everything is wrong with *The Barber Had Two Sons*. It is badly written. It is badly directed. It is for the most part badly acted. It plods. It rambles. For 2½ acts, it almost talks you into a coma. Pretty serious in its intentions, it is all too often ludicrous in its effect. Exploiting melodrama to the utmost, it reduces suspense to a minimum. And, beyond all this, both its Norwegians and its Nazis most of the time behave in a fashion that can be described only as dimwitted.

* * *

The barber of the title is a woman, an unflinching Norwegian patriot who, when the time comes, can let go with both barrels. Her two sons are one of them courageous—the leader, in fact, of a plot to overpower the Nazis—and one of them cowardly. Her two sons are also enmeshed with one girl, a young lady very much out for herself. The play builds toward the coup that is to dislodge the Nazis, and it is while it is building that almost everybody exhibits distressing signs of feeble-mindedness. Most of the Norwegians do everything to arouse suspicion, short of shouting their plans from the housetop. The Nazis, however, are obliging enough to do nothing when they stumble on the truth except hurry away from it.

The authors also have a way, at the most serious and climactic moments, of using a technique that long ago was patented for farce. Thus the conspirators decide they must get hold of a Nazi officer's uniform. Exactly one second later, into the barber shop steps a Nazi officer! This neat sequence of events raises a roar of laughter, which is hardly the right note, in a serious play, for —of all things—a second-act curtain.

For the most part, Blanche Yurka palpably underplayed the role of the mother, which is probably as good a way of playing it as any. The rest of the cast ranged from adequate to bad, which, in view of their assignments, was hardly to be wondered at.

NEW YORK TIMES
February 2, 1943

THE PLAY IN REVIEW

"The Barber Had Two Sons"

By LEWIS NICHOLS

FROM out the great West has come "The Barber Had Two Sons" to set up shop —though it may be briefly—at Mr. Brady's Playhouse and to push back into the darkness the Broadway theatre that lately has been playing happily in the light. For Thomas Duggan and James Hogan here have written a melodrama with slamming doors to signify excitement and with Norwegian patriots to show that the year is 1943. Their news sense is better than their dramaturgy but the result is that the evening gets no where at all, lingeringly. Life at 8:40 at night requires much more than this one.

The barber is a Norwegian woman and she has two sons, one an artist, the other a sea captain. The artist, in the usual theatrical conception of same, is the weak one, the mariner joins the undercover movement to fight Hitler after his soldiers have taken over their town. As though fighting the Germans weren't enough, the brothers also fight over a girl. A baggage, she is, and one who apparently will go around with any one, including the Herr Commissioner, who will take her away from these. She may have a point in this, of course, but her actions on behalf of "The Barber Had Two Sons" are obscure, nay, even silly.

* * *

To provide scope for all the doings that go forward, Phil Raguel has designed a setting with a single door, a double door, a trap door into the ocean, a window and a stairs. The playwrights and Melville Burke, who directed, see that all these are used constantly, almost in rotation. Men come up the trapdoor and bodies go down, the front door bangs, the cast bounds up the stairs as Nazis arrive with tommy guns. With all the physical exertion on the stage, something important really should happen; the tragedy is that nothing does.

There is a cast of varying accents to play the various roles, a cast that unites only in calling Herr Hitler's capital Berleen. Blanche Yurka is the barber and mother of the two boys, and despite a distinguished record in the theatre this is not her specialty, since much of the time she over-plays. Richard Powers and Walter Brooke are the two sons and Tutta Rolf, a Norwegian actress, has to do what she can with the completely bizarre rôle of the girl. In the part of one of the patriots is Wolfgang Zilzer, who gives a well thought out performance and some day will be in a better play.

"The Patriots"

NEW YORK SUN
January 30, 1943

Sidney Kingsley's New Play, 'The Patriots,' Offered at the National

By WARD MOREHOUSE

THE Playwrights' Company, for the first time in the several seasons of its existence, has gone outside its membership for an author and a play, and this play, "The Patriots," was presented last evening at the National with Rowland Stebbins serving as co-producer. It is the work of Sidney Kingsley, who gave a grateful Broadway "Dead End" and "Men in White."

Mr. Kingsley's historical drama, covering a turbulent decade, 1790-1800, in the life of Thomas Jefferson and the affairs of a restive and struggling America, is interesting and frequently stirring. Here and there it falters, but it quickly recovers. And out of it all the character of George Washington, still grim, but aging, saddened, sick and bewildered, emerges heroically.

In its prologue and seven scenes "The Patriots" pictures the ferments and the discords, the hatreds and the antagonisms of the Republic in the years following victory at Yorktown. It is a play of a nation shaping itself—groping, confused, unsettled; an America of bitterness and controversy, party and politics, facing financial chaos and at times on the brink of ruin.

Mr. Kingsley begins his play with Jefferson on the deck of a schooner, homeward-bound after serving his government abroad, and he finishes with Jefferson speaking after having taken his oath of office as the Third President. "The Patriots" reveals the sustained and ever-growing hatred of Alexander Hamilton for Jefferson; it brings in James Monroe's accusations against Hamilton of misuse of public funds, with the subsequent revelations of infidelity and blackmail in Hamilton's life; it presents Jefferson's grief over the death of his wife and his yearning to retire from public life and to return to the serenity of Monticello. And, in a moving and well-played scene, it depicts Hamilton as a man who loves his country but doesn't understand its people. By his own admission he is becoming, day by day, "more foreign to this land."

And yet, because his devotion to the Republic is greater than his hatred of Jefferson and his policies, Hamilton, when facing a Jefferson who prefers defeat to compromise, makes the only decision that is possible for him—he will break the congressional deadlock and clear the way for Jefferson's ascendency to the presidency although he foresees, by this very act, death in a duel at the hands of Aaron Burr.

For the role of Thomas Jefferson the Playwrights' Company and Mr. Stebbins have chosen Raymond Edward Johnson, out of radio and making his Broadway debut. Last night Mr. Johnson gave a curiously uneven performance; in some scenes he was awkward but in many others he was genuinely moving. Perhaps the monotony of certain moments was the fault of the writing to a greater extent than the acting. It is a performance that will gain in force and balance as the play continues its run.

Cecil Humphreys, an excellent actor, is admirable as Washington, Hosea Jameson gives vigor and incisiveness to his portrayal of Hamilton. Madge Evans is decorative indeed as Jefferson's daughter, a part that somehow does not add materially to the strength of the play. Frances Reid is lovely and affecting in two brief scenes as Martha.

"The Patriots," the third production of the Playwrights' Company this season, has been well-staged by Shepard Traube. It is tastefully mounted, costumed and lighted and is, on the whole, a worthy contribution to a theatrical season that sorely needs it.

To Sergeant Sidney Kingsley, who completed "The Patriots" in whatever odd moments the military grudgingly gave him, I offer greetings and felicitations.

'THE PATRIOTS'

Play in prologue and three acts by Sidney Kingsley; staged by Shepard Traube; settings designed by Howard Bay; presented at National Theater, January 29, 1943, by the Playwrights' Company and Rowland Stebbins. The cast:

Captain	Byron Russell
Thomas Jefferson	Raymond Edward Johnson
Patsy	Madge Evans
Martha	Frances Reid
James Madison	Ross Matthew
Alexander Hamilton	House Jameson
George Washington	Cecil Humphreys
Sergeant	Victor Southwick
Colonel Humphrey	Francis Compton
Jacob	Thomas Dillon
Ned	George Mitchell
Mat	Philip White
James Monroe	Judson Laire
Mrs. Hamilton	Peg La Centra
Henry Knox	Henry Mowbray
Butler	Robert Lance
Mr. Fenno	Ronald Alexander
Jupiter	Juano Hernandez
Mrs. Conrad	Leslie Bingham
Frontiersman	John Stephen
Thomas Jefferson Randolph	Billy Nevard
Anne Randolph	Hope Lange
George Washington Lafayette	Jack Lloyd

"The Patriots"

NEW YORK JOURNAL AMERICAN
January 30, 1943

"The Patriots" Opens At National Theatre

By JOHN ANDERSON

IN CHOOSING the political fight between Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton as the subject for his newest play "The Patriots," Sidney Kingsley found, of course, ready-made drama, momentous, fascinating, and significant.

Though the play itself had its moments of waxworks calm at the National last night, when it was presented by the Playwrights Company in association with Rowland Stebbins, the violence and importance of the conflict, the vivid personalities and the issues involved gave it an absorbing interest, so that in spite of a wabbly beginning, some unsteady passages, and a rather flat ending, the material itself triumphed finally over the defects in writing.

At a moment when the principles of democracy Jefferson fought for are being tested again in war, against another Napoleonic delusion, it is bound to be engrossing stuff, with an almost topical emphasis.

Since Mr. Kingsley naturally depended on the present situation to give his play a suitable emotional atmosphere, he is safe to some extent, from the usual theatre risks of historical stuffiness. He has been exceedingly adroit in the selection of his material, and has focused his drama sharply on the great crisis which threatened the Republic within a few years of the Declaration of Independence.

It was the moment when an aging Washington found two hopelessly irreconcilable factions represented in his cabinet by two brilliant revolutionary leaders, who fought, as Jefferson himself put it, "like two cocks in a pit." Hamilton's followers, Jefferson said, were "itching for crowns, coronets and mitres," while Jefferson had faith in the new Constitution, in the ability of the people to govern themselves, and in the theory that "reformation is more practicable by operating on the mind than on the body of man."

Jefferson Ideal

When the personal authority of Washington (who had twice refused a crown) was lost at his death, the destiny of the nation lay in the struggle of the Jeffersonian ideal to survive, and it is this struggle which gives Mr. Kingsley's play its sustaining interest and its immediate impact. If Aaron Burr, with his Napoleonic backing, his personal ambition and his ruthless methods, had won the Presidency, instead of losing it by a narrow margin to Jefferson, we would have had something more than one of the largest "Ifs" in history to bother us.

"The Patriots" covers the period of Jefferson's service in the cabinet, at the expense of his personal affairs, and his insistence on opposing Hamilton without compromise for the survival of constitutional government. It suggests the sacrifice of an old man, longing for a quiet private life, in serving his country.

It touches Washington impressively, and in Cecil Humphreys' acting suggests the dignity and humanity, as well as the wisdom and vitality, of the First President. Only the most ardent partisans of Hamilton can complain that the playwright is unfair to the complicated and brilliant First Secretary of the Treasury.

For the sake of dramatic continuity, a few changes have been made in time and place—notably in Washington's refusal to let Jefferson leave the cabinet—a discussion which occurred at Mount Vernon, not Philadelphia. The Jefferson-Burr election was, I believe, 1801, not 1800 as the playbill put it.

Not all of the performances are as vivid as Mr. Humphreys, in spite of Mr. Traube's direction, which manages generally to avoid some of the stiffness of the writing, and the inevitable problem of getting actors to wear period costumes as they would their everyday clothes.

Strong Likeness

In casting a radio actor, Raymond Edward Johnson, as Jefferson, a certain physical resemblance was undoubtedly achieved. As the older Jefferson, in fact, Mr. Johnson contrived a strong likeness to the Houdon bust.

Though he caught the simplicity of the man and suggested his democratic impulses he did so, it seemed to me at times, at the sacrifice of other qualities, sometimes patrician, sometimes intellectual, but in general he captured the broader quality the play set out to dramatize—Jefferson's sincerity, idealism, and unflinching courage.

House Jameson indicated the personal force, if not the style and arrogance usually associated with Hamilton, and in the excellent last act scene of political duelling, his performance suggested a physical vitality and energy admirably contrasted with Jefferson's spiritual tenacity and indomitable will.

Some of the smaller parts were well played, some badly. Poor Mr. Madison fared none too well at the hands of Ross Matthew, and Peg LaCentra struggled valiently against a sketchily written portrait of Mrs. Hamilton. Madge Evans, who is Mrs. Kingsley, does better without much help from her husband author, as Jefferson's daughter, and there is a nice bit by Juano Hernandez as Jefferson's servant.

Mr. Bay's settings are simple, effective, and swiftly changed, and Moe Hack's lighting enormously helpful, especially to Mr. Johnson.

Altogether these elements go to make up an evening in the theatre which owes more to history than to the drama, but which is in any case, thoughtful, provocative and pertinent.

NEW YORK POST
January 30, 1943

Sidney Kingsley's "The Patriots" Produced At the National Theatre

By WILELLA WALDORF

OUT of the early struggles of our Republic, Sidney Kingsley has written a new play called "The Patriots" which serves to remind us in these troubled times that Democracy has never been easy to achieve, and that it is still worth fighting for.

Produced last night at the National Theatre by The Playwrights' Company and Rowland Stebbins, it is a patriotic drama that does not descend to the more obvious forms of flag waving and platform ranting.

The author chooses to make his points by giving us a few scenes from the life and public career of Thomas Jefferson from 1790, when he returned from France to become Secretary of State in Washington's cabinet, through those perilous times when it looked for a while as if the Republic were doomed to fall between the extremes of anarchy or monarchy, to the year 1800 when he became third President of the United States after a period of uncertainty and political dissension which threatened to wreck the Constitution itself.

The Functioning of a Democracy

It was at this crucial moment in our history that Alexander Hamilton, the Federalist leader, Jefferson's bitterest personal and political enemy, threw his influence to the side of justice and prevented the House of Representatives from denying Jefferson the office to which the people had so obviously elected him.

The fact that Jefferson, because of a technical flaw in the framing of the Constitution, actually owed his accession to the Presidency to the patriotic intelligence and sense of justice of the leader of the opposition is a strong and vigorous example of Democracy properly functioning in the hands of men of unyielding integrity.

It seemed to us that Mr. Kingsley stacked the cards a bit in favor of Jefferson when he reached this climactic scene at the National last night. Perhaps, to be sure, the point of view depends on what historians one reads and prefers—the Federalist or the Jeffersonian Democrats—but we have always been inclined to regard this episode in our history as admirable evidence of personal integrity and a sort of exalted statesmanship on the part of Hamilton.

Mr. Kingsley, writing a scene between the two enemies, represents Hamilton as seeking compromise, and, failing, succumbing to Jefferson's brilliant delineation of the forces of Democracy rampant and his firm threat to join in the shooting if the Federalists endeavor to set aside the will of the people.

Jefferson's Fight to Save the Republic

Mr. Kingsley is, of course, a Jeffersonian. His play uses Jefferson as a symbol of Democratic government in its most enlightened form, and it is therefore at its best, not when he is exalting Jefferson at the expense of Hamilton in the final act, but earlier, during Washington's lifetime, when Jefferson and Hamilton were at each other's throats as Secretaries of State and the Treasury, and the riotous echoes of the French Revolution were stirring the minds and emotions of Americans who had so lately staged a Revolution of their own.

Weary of the fight, longing to return to his beloved Monticello, Jefferson was on the point of leaving public life forever, of bowing out in favor of Hamilton and his Federalists, when it dawned upon him that the young Republic stood in a most perilous position. All that held it together was the universal respect and devotion to Washington, an old man.

Washington dead, it could hardly help falling into the hands of an incoherent rabble of the extremest type then prevailing in France, or—what Jefferson considered just as bad—becoming a monarchy under the Federalists. One man, Jefferson, alone, who understood the people and believed in their right to govern themselves, had it in his power to form a new people's party, organize the revolutionary spirit into a coherent and a moderate force, and use that force to govern.

"It is not enough to create the form of a Republic, we must make it work!"

And so Jefferson, a simple, retiring man who would have preferred to be a farmer and live quietly in his own home, plunged into politics as the people's interpreter and champion, and made Democracy work.

The Cast and Production

"The Patriots" is not a brilliant play, nor even a particularly well organized presentation of ten turbulent years in the life of the man who wrote the Declaration of Independence, but it has some encouraging things to say to us through his lips now that the Republic is again profoundly agitated by turmoil abroad, and dissension at home.

The production at the National is intelligent and painstaking, competently designed by Howard Bay and directed with spirit by Shepard Traube, who, with the author, has endeavored to remove as much of the stiffness as possible from historical characters.

Cecil Humphreys makes a delightful and very believable figure of Washington, House Jameson is forthright if somewhat overly choleric now and then as Hamilton and Raymond Edward Johnson, a radio actor making his Broadway debut, gives a reasonable and sympathetic portrait of Jefferson, a little on the stiff side at first, but more pliable and easy as time goes on. Madge Evans, the author's wife, plays Jefferson's eldest daughter with great charm, and a large company lends excellent support.

It is difficult to imagine a drama about Thomas Jefferson without a single scene at Monticello. Mr. Kingsley, we imagine, arranged this deliberately and with reason. Stressing Jefferson's longing for his home, his revulsion against politics and public life, he shows him aboard ship, in New York, in Philadelphia and in Washington, with Monticello always somewhere in the background of his mind, but never any nearer than that, as long as he was called upon to dedicate his life to his country.

"The Patriots"

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
January 30, 1943

'The Patriots' Finds Inspiring Moments in Our Political Past

"The Patriots," drama by Sidney Kingsley. Produced by the Playwrights' Company in association with Rowland Stebbins at the National Theatre, New York, Jan. 29, 1943.

★ ★ ★

By BURNS MANTLE

SIDNEY KINGSLEY'S "The Patriots," which came to production finally at the National Theatre last night, discloses certain little known, or at least seldom referred to, moments in our political history in which the moving figures are an idealistic Thomas Jefferson, a peppery and over-ambitious Alexander Hamilton, and a fatherly, amiable and often disgusted George Washington.

The results are often sentimentally and dramatically stirring, and frequently ominously revealing. Revealing in the sense that they expose the weaknesses of a democracy as frequently as they proclaim its virtues.

The parallel with these war years, through which we are stumbling hopefully and determinedly, is found in the characters and ideals of the political leaders involved, rather than in any similiarity or duplication of events.

And it is because of these lightly depressing parallels, which every man will pick out for himself to bolster his own convictions, that "The Patriots" burns with a somewhat less steady flame than did that other Playwrights' Company gift to stage history, Robert Sherwood's "Abe Lincoln in Illinois."

Jefferson's Problem

Mr. Kingsley sees Jefferson as the most gifted and the most harassed of the political leaders of his day. He was the democratic aristocrat as opposed to Hamilton, the would-be aristocratic democrat.

Jefferson's heart's blood went into the writing of the Declaration of Independence for which he fought, and flowed out again when he saw the petty and selfish uses to which his people would put the liberties they had suffered such sacrifices to win.

In Washington's cabinet he is bitterly opposed by Hamilton, a statesman of great virtues and common faults, who would barter and bargain in the name of political expediency, and who had little faith in the slow processes of a free people's development.

Knowing that if the new-won freedoms were to endure, and the government of the people was to live, he must have the help of both these men, Washington was at his wits' end to keep them in line. He managed it finally by sitting hard on Hamilton and begging a little pathetically for help from Jefferson.

Splendid Staging

As a production and as a performance "The Patriots" does its producers and the American theatre great honor.

The actors have been carefully selected for the three chief roles. One of radio's eloquent voices, backed by sympathetic and appealing personality, has been borrowed for the role of Jefferson.

He is Raymond Edward Johnson, and he nobly suggests the spiritual strength of Jefferson, brought frequently to the breaking point by his steadfast hold to ideals neither the people nor his political associates fully understood.

House Jameson, the fiery actor who played so forceful a Senator Lodge in "In Time to Come" that this audience hated him heartily, here serves an Alexander Hamilton who, one is bound to believe, is somewhat exaggerated by Mr. Kingsley to make sure that he will serve the play as a proper menace.

In the end Hamilton acknowledges his own defeat, throws his support to Jefferson in the contest with Aaron Burr, and takes on the better qualities even his political enemies granted him.

Cecil Humphreys' Washington, carried through his declining years, is a minor masterpiece of stage characterization at its best.

There is a nice picture of the Jefferson daughter, Patsy, by Madge Evans, and short parts well played by Francis Compton, Henry Mowbray, Thomas Dillon, Juano Hernandez and others.

Shepard Traube has done an effective job of staging and Howard Bay's settings are gems of color and colonial beauty.

NEW YORK NEWSPAPER "PM"
January 31, 1943

A Vivid Chapter in U. S. History

By LOUIS KRONENBERGER

IN *THE PATRIOTS* Sidney Kingsley has dramatized the great conflict that flared up, between two statesmen who symbolized two political philosophies, in the infant days of this republic. As the conflict waged by Jefferson and Hamilton has gone on ever since, it is still a burning one today and may be a decisive one tomorrow. *The Patriots* is no idle return to yesterday. Its living message is written large all over its materials. And though Mr. Kingsley, beset with all the difficulties of a dramatist turned historian, has hardly caught the countenance of history, he has found its pulse and at times its voice, and written a play that is steadily interesting and occasionally eloquent and dramatic.

Mr. Kingsley has written of the years 1790-1801, beginning with Jefferson's return from being our Minister to France and concluding with his First Inaugural Address. Though Mr. Kingsley has tried to humanize his hero with a few scenes of family life and some running references to his non-political talents, it is the statesman and not the man—one might fairly say the symbol and not the man—who really occupies the stage. And though George Washington appears as a kind of weary mediator, and men like Madison and Monroe catch a fraction of the limelight, the play is almost wholly centered in the clash between Jefferson and Hamilton. The Secretary of State who championed democracy and the Secretary of the Treasury who spoke of "that great beast, the people" were set against each other from the first. From two Revolutions they had drawn different morals; and during one Administration they hacked out irreconcilable courses. The plutocracy that Hamilton tried to establish under a thin aristocratic veneer Jefferson saw as the deathblow to all his dreams. The victory of those 11 years, though scarcely of the hundred-odd that followed them, was Jefferson's. In the presidential election that saw Burr and Jefferson tied for votes, Hamilton broke the deadlock by throwing his influence to the democrat he hated as against the adventurer he feared.

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The Patriots is a rhetorical play whose issues are portrayed far more vividly than its men. But by concentrating on those issues Mr. Kingsley—despite his indifferently episodic structure and his sometimes stiff and literary dialogue—has achieved a genuine unity. And in his big second-act confrontation of Jefferson and Hamilton he has achieved a genuine eloquence. The play has its own kind of force, even though breadth, color and intimacy have been ruthlessly sacrificed—or hopelessly lost—to achieve it. It has, in short, most of the weaknesses that go with putting history on the stage. But it does have the strength of bringing one of the great crises of our history graphically home to its audience. That is reason enough for seeing it.

If it has not limbered up Mr. Kingsley's characters, Shepard Traube's direction gives *The Patriots* a vigorous rhetorical impact. Raymond Edward Johnson's Jefferson is forceful and believable. Cecil Humphreys' Washington is skillful and surprisingly human. House Jameson's Hamilton seems coarse, though Mr. Kingsley has endowed Jefferson's enemy with little of the grace and charm that history allows him. Howard Bay's sets are extraordinarily good.

NEW YORK TIMES
January 30, 1943

THE PLAY IN REVIEW
"The Patriots"

By LEWIS NICHOLS

IN "THE PATRIOTS," Sidney Kingsley has turned to the early days of his country for the material for a truly fine play. He has written of Jefferson, of Hamilton and Washington and of a doctrine, then new, of democratic liberty. Last evening the Playwrights Company and Rowland Stebbins offered it at the National, where it quite clearly was one of the best dramas in a long while, moving and inspiring and expressing ideas that are alike of 1800 and 1943. For this is the bicentenary of the birth of Jefferson, and this also is the second year of a desperate war to preserve the doctrines he summed up as author of the Declaration of Independence. Finally, Mr. Kingsley now is a sergeant in the Army fighting for that preservation.

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Although Jefferson is the leading character of "The Patriots," democracy is its hero. In the last decade of the eighteenth century freedom had fallen on dangerous days. There were monarchists here and there was a troubled Europe across the ocean. Mr. Kingsley's play begins with the return of Jefferson from France, when he wished to retire to Monticello, but was persuaded to enter Washington's Cabinet as Secretary of State. He continues with the bitter quarrel with Hamilton, through the period when it seemed only Jefferson—and the common people who had fought for it—held faith in the experiment; and he ends with Jefferson's inaugural address as President in 1800.

As a playwright, Mr. Kingsley has taken only an editor's liberty with the record. Hamiltonians may say that the first Secretary of the Treasury comes off rather badly until the end, but the title is in the plural and Mr. Kingsley agrees he was a patriot, too. As he presents the history of those terrible days when disaster was so near, the playwright need point no moral about today, although the moral is there in both the Declaration and the Inaugural Address. In writing of the past, Mr. Kingsley has written most excellently of the immediate present.

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All concerned have given "The Patriots" a magnificent production. In the role of Jefferson is Raymond Edward Johnson, who is taking a step from the radio to a Broadway debut in a part such as he may never get again nor, possibly may ever play so well. Mr. Johnson has an angular, expressive face with a wide mouth and a deep voice and lanky bearing not unlike Raymond Massey. He conveys excellently the various moods of Jefferson: the idealist, the student, the man who hated politics yet always was forced to live with them, the farmer who wished himself back at his beloved Monticello. It is a portrait not unworthy of comparison with Mr. Massey's Lincoln.

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House Jameson also has caught the qualities that apparently were Hamilton's—a youthful bumptiousness and an overbearing manner, prepared to go to almost any length to get his way, yet sincerely convinced that his way was the best for the country. Cecil Humphreys plays Washington, looking, incidentally, surprisingly like the Stuart portraits, and Ross Matthew and Judson Laire are Madison and Monroe. Madge Evans, who also is Mrs. Kingsley, plays the only important feminine part, that of Jefferson's daughter, Patsy. Shepard Traube, whose last Broadway directorial occupation was in the quite different mood of "Angel Street," has staged "The Patriots" so that it flows evenly and with emphasis. The settings are by Howard Bay, and they, too, are in perfect harmony.